

MINUTES

LEADER Local Action Group – Strategic Management Group Meeting

Wednesday 18 April 2018, 10.00am

Held at:	Solway House, Heathhall, Dumfries	
Present	Peter Ross (PR) Caroline Brown (CB) Barry Dunne (BD)	Alastair McNeill (AM) David Rennie (DR)
Staff	Nicola Hill (NH) Simone Tyrie (ST)	Jessie Mason (JM)
Apologies	Cathy Agnew Harry Harbottle	Archie Dryburgh Andrew Wood

Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and thanked those in attendance for accommodating the change of date in order that attendance to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD conference could be made. A report on the conference will be circulated by PR to the LAG, as per the January Staff Report. **Action: PR**

Please note as the meeting was not quorate, no decision could be made. The minute of the January SMG will be taken to the July SMG for approval. A note of the meeting of 18 April 2018 was made.

The Chair likes to bring a note of optimism and inspiration to the meeting and took the opportunity to introduce members to a new drink from Estonia “Spruce Needle Juice” advising members of the benefits that could be gained from drinking it. It took him back to his days of being in the forestry industry and remarking at the time about the uses for the huge number of Sitka Spruce that were being planted in Dumfries and Galloway at the time, saying we will end up drinking it. It appears he was right.

Apologies

JM advised the members who had offered apologies - see above.

Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting will be carried forward to the SMG meeting on 11 July for approval, as the meeting was not quorate.

Actions from the last meeting

LDS change request had been submitted and approved and revised version circulated.
YOYP – NH to contact Mark Molloy C/F
CLD Strategic Report has been forwarded to AW as requested
BD contacted FAS to identify expertise available
Working group for Strategic Projects – to discuss if this is to be formed later in the meeting

Budget Profile

NH referred members to the January Staff Report containing detail of projects and funding awarded. The LEADER team were also asked recently by Scottish Government to report on the commitment of funds for our area. It was reported back that we were confident all funds would be awarded in the remaining time, taking into consideration what we have in the form of EOI's and draft applications in the pipeline. The team posed the question of whether or not there was an opportunity to move funds based on the information provided. The team were informed that reviews were ongoing.

In addition, the LEADER team were asked to provide information to the Accountable Bodies Group on our funding commitment. Unlikely to receive any definitive response before the next AB meeting in June. The AB group will use the information provided to approach Scottish Government to request movement of funds out of Cooperation into other funding streams to encourage full commitment of LAGs.

FLAG has been slow to award funding until now, but the project officer has worked hard to bring a good number of projects forward for consideration. Based on Expressions of Interest received to date the EMFF programme may be oversubscribed.

NH is comfortable with our position regarding pipeline and project start dates etc that all funds will be committed by March 2019 and therefore completed by March 2020. Our focus should not change; we need to keep publicising the funding for new projects and opportunities.

AM asked if there were any concerns of applicants not completing their projects or using all funding awarded. NH carries out in situ visits and if any areas for concern were highlighted she would arrange interim visits to closer monitor the situation. ST and JM are constantly in touch with clients and on top of milestone dates and clients.

DR queried the outcome of decisions of last LEADER group meeting i.e. lower number of applications getting to the meetings, and asked how much effort is made to ensure applications successfully make it to meetings. NH advised the project officers were working with tranches of applicants every 3 months, juggling EOI's, draft or actual applications. Reasons for differences in application numbers reported is due to circumstances out with the LEADER team's control e.g. match funding decisions, planning permission etc.

There are a number of Cooperation projects in the pipeline both cross-border and transnational.

NH advised the group there is a 'pot' of funding for cooperation projects held centrally by Marine Scotland. NH and the project officer are looking into the possibility of developing a cooperation project with the FLAG and submitting an application.

BD asked how applications were looked at when it appears we are nearing the end of the funds. NH confirmed the process undertaken if the LEADER and FLAG groups are in the position of being over-subscribed for the funds available. NH reiterated that we do need to manage expectations of applicants.

BD asked where D&G LAG sits compared with other Scottish LAG areas around potential to fully commit their funds. NH advised that D&G is well placed against other LAGs to fully commit across all 'pots' of funding.

NH advised that D&G LAG is in a better position than many other LAGS with regard to Cooperation projects. It is difficult to do Cooperation Projects, as it can take years of development work to get partners and a project to fruition. We already had Day of the Region and had a lot of groundwork done for Amaze Me LEADER.

We have received notice of some Cooperation projects looking for partners in the last few months and these have been forwarded to appropriate local contacts.

NH and ST advised the members that there is potential to move funds from Operating Costs into Project funding. NH requested agreement from members that if required to meet demand across project fund 'pots' that they would provide approval electronically. The meeting noted they allowed NH to circulate a request for electronic decision if moving funds were required.

Setting up a Strategic Project sub group has been previously discussed at SMG, is this still required. It was felt at this stage that that is was not required, but may be in future.

Training

VOiCE Training, delivered by Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) has been organised and invitations circulated to LAG, staff and projects – there are 20 places and so far nine have been confirmed. Training will be in Castle Douglas from 10am to 4pm, lunch will be provided.

NH is in discussion with Social Investment Scotland and Community Share Scotland to deliver a 1-day session on 'Getting ready for Investment'. Dates/venues still to be confirmed.

AOCB

DR Noted the project reports in the staff report were informative and asked if we were comfortable with all the projects and their performance. NH said there are challenges overseeing 45 projects and there were some that were more engaged than others. The team continually monitor the performance of projects via project claims and project visits. The team have recently made contact with projects who have yet to submit a claim to ensure they are on track to deliver. It is important that the team find a balance between monitoring and allowing projects to deliver.

The Chair took the opportunity to acknowledge the work carried out by the LEADER team and was impressed with everything detailed in the Staff Report.

NH advised the meeting that D&G LEADER has been randomly selected for an audit to be carried out by the Scottish Government Internal Audit team. This audit will be completed during the month of May. The team will report on the outcome of this audit in the next Staff Report

Date of Next Meeting

11 July 2018 at 10am – venue Holiday Inn, Dumfries.

Meeting closed at 11.05am.

Meeting resumed at 11.20am

Simone Tyrie and Jessie Mason left the meeting.

LAG members joining meeting:

Rob Wells Jenny Wilson Tony Fitzpatrick Clair McFarlan

Peter Ross welcomed those LAG members joining the meeting and thanked them for attending. He then set the context for the session – a short presentation followed by open discussion about the future direction for LEADER post Brexit 2020.

David Rennie delivered a presentation providing information regarding the following:

- South of Scotland Economic Partnership (SoSEP)
- South of Scotland Economic Agency (SoSEA)
- Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal

A copy of the presentation is included as an appendix to the minutes.

The presentation stimulated discussion about how best LEADER and the LAG can input into the development of the new Economic Agency and the Borderlands initiative. There is currently a public consultation led by Scottish Government on the SoSEA and the group agreed that a LAG response should be submitted, alongside that individuals were encouraged to respond. The group agreed that a small Sub Group of the LAG should prepare and submit a response on behalf of the LAG.

Peter Ross advised the group he had met Amanda Bryan, Director and Chair of Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (Crown Estate, Forestry Commission and previous D&G Rural Awards judge) at the recent OECD Conference. Amanda expressed great interest in the discussions D&G LAG were having around the future of LEADER and offered to meet with the LAG to further expand the discussion.

The deadline for responses to the consultation is 7th June 2018.

NH to email LAG members to establish the Sub Group and agree a date to meet. **Action: NH**
NH/PR to contact Amanda Bryan and invite her to attend the Sub Group meeting. **Action PR/NH**

A number of SoSEA Consultation events are being held across both Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders. The details of these events have been circulated to LAG members and members are encouraged to attend. Link: www.sup.org.uk/sosep.asp

The group discussed the potential over-subscription of applications to LEADER and would like to explore the possibility of the two LAG areas (Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders) approaching SoSEP for funding to fill the gap and allow projects to be supported beyond the scope of LEADER allocations.

The meeting closed at 1pm.

DRAFT

Appendix



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Powerpoint Presentation delivered by David Rennie

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